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ABSTRACT

This publication seeks to provide a basis for constructive action in improving and reforming the policy making machinery of American public education. The material is presented in the form of 11 recommendations directed at the three policy making levels: local, State, and Federal. A recommendation concerning all levels is that policy making staffs be upgraded and compensated accordingly. At the local level, reductions in the absolute number of school districts and elimination of fiscal inequities among school districts are suggested. State governments and the Federal Government are urged to assume greater financial participation in educational programs. A Federal Department of Education with Cabinet rank is proposed. (RA)

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Recommendations based upon Working Papers
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NATIONAL ACADEMY OF EDUCATION

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Roald F. Campbell, Chairman

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March 1969

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Foreword

The National Academy of Education was founded in 1965 to promote ". . . the advancement of scholarship concerning the ends and means of education, in all its forms, in the United States and abroad."

The founders and sponsors determined at the outset that the Academy would be restricted initially to a small number of United States citizens whose scholarly and scientific writings bearing on the subject of education were judged outstanding. The hope was that what up to that time had been an "invisible college" of intellectual and personal relationships would be given form and structure, and that the Academy would become a forum for conversation, debate, and mutual instruction; a rostrum for the communication of scholarly information and opinion; a stimulus for innovative and fruitful research; and a source of counsel for such public and private agencies as require and request it.

Although from the beginning the Academy has been divided into four sections (i.e., the History and Philosophy of Education; the Politics, Economics, Sociology and Anthropology of Education; the Psychology of Education; and the Study of Educational Practice), its first major reports have emanated from two ad-hoc and crosscutting committees, one on Educational Research, under the direction of Professors Lee J. Cronbach and Patrick Suppes, and one on Educational Policy, under the direction of Dean Roald F. Campbell. Both committees were established in 1966.

Policy Making for American Public Schools is a product of the deliberations of the latter. It is also an official statement of NAE policy, adopted at the October 1968 meeting of the Academy in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The statement itself is based upon a series of working papers prepared and compiled by Dean Campbell and Donald H. Layton during 1966-1967, with the advice and comment of other members of the Academy's Committee on Educational Policy.

In approving the final policy statement, several individual members of the Academy evinced reservations about particular policy recommendations. These disagreements are reflected in a section that follows the text of the report.

It is hoped that at the very least, the Report on *Policy Making for American Public Schools* will stimulate widespread discussion among policy makers at every level of government, and will serve as a basis for constructive action in improving and reforming the policy making machinery for American public education across the length and breadth of the nation.

Ralph W. Tyler
President

POLICY MAKING FOR AMERICAN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Introduction

More than fifty million children are presently being educated in the public elementary and secondary schools of the United States.

The quality of their schooling is a matter of profound national consequence. Skills and attitudes developed through this system of schools will in large measure determine the prosperity, security, culture, freedom, and capacity for rational and self-corrective adjustments to inexorable and unprecedented change, of the American society in the remaining third of the Twentieth century.

Public schools are not the sole purveyors of educational services, nor should they be. Families, mass media, books and periodicals, travel, religious institutions, character-building youth groups, industrial training programs, organized sports, various civic and cultural associations and facilities, summer camps, private schools, and a host of other influences are also a meaningful part of the educational process. Looking ahead, some of these non-public school influences will most certainly be asked to contribute even more educational services than they do presently.

But, for years to come, the formal public school system will continue to bear a fundamental educational responsibility.

The remarkable contribution of public schools to America's economic growth, social assimilation and mobility, technological prowess, and general progress needs neither explication nor elaboration.

But if schools can take a large share of the credit for America's successes, they must also absorb some of the blame for America's failures. Evidences of social pathology abound, and each reflects cultural inadequacies for which our educational system must in part be held responsible.

If criticism of the educational effectiveness of the nation's schools is particularly rife today, it is because the observable problems and tensions in the American society have temporarily run far ahead of the capacity of the nation's educational policy makers to negotiate and resolve. In truth, many educational problems inside our schools cannot be solved within the school system. They are dependent for their solution upon the resolution of far broader social and economic questions related to such issues as health, jobs, housing, welfare, and discrimination.

It may be argued that schools cannot transcend the culture that sustains them or the educators who presently man them. But schools, historically, have done exactly this. They have responded to the demands of perceptive political, intellectual and educational leaders (including educators themselves) who have transcended their own cultural context in order to criticise and to improve it. Witness the drastic reduction in the number of small and inadequate school districts in the past thirty years; witness the "new math" and the pedagogical innovations in the teaching of foreign languages; witness the emergence of pupil counseling services. Policy making, almost by definition, is the conscious attempt of officials, legislators, and interested publics, to find constructive

responses to the needs and pathologies which they observe in their surrounding culture. In these terms, educational policy making has a rich and reassuring history.

But official and lay leaders concerned with educational policy making have no right to a sanguine assumption that their sins and their salvation lie outside themselves. Some of the rigidities and inadequacies characteristic of elementary and secondary schooling in the United States are grotesque, and contribute both directly and indirectly to the more general social pathologies that trouble our nation. If schools are to improve their capacity to respond to insistent national needs, the structure and processes of educational policy making in America need to be substantially overhauled and recast.

That educational policy making in the United States has been, and is, exceedingly diffused, pluralistic, and decentralized (and in large measure should remain so) is simply another reason for urgency in sorting out and refining the instruments and behaviors most likely to effect a general improvement in the decision-making apparatus of this complex system.

In the light of these realities and necessities, we, the members of the National Academy of Education, dedicated by charter "to promote scholarly inquiry and discussion concerning the ends and means of education, in all of its forms, in the United States and abroad," recommend that urgent attention be given to the following reforms which we believe are needed in the structure and processes of American educational policy making:

Recommendations

I. Improving Educational Policy Making at the Local Level

A. *The number of school districts in the United States should be drastically reduced, and normally no school district should contain fewer than 5,000 nor more than 150,000 pupils.*

At one time the number of school districts in the United States numbered over 130,000. This number, despite large increases in enrollment, has now been reduced to some 20,000. We probably need no more than 5,000 such districts.

The limited revenue resources generally available to school districts containing fewer than 5,000 pupils leads to a series of derivative problems. Small districts are often unable to attract and hold a competent supervisory and teaching staff. They find it difficult, if not impossible, to build, equip, and maintain adequate educational facilities. And the range of course offerings they can provide, especially at the high school level, are frequently inadequate to give the necessary educational opportunities to children of the area. In addition to problems caused by their restricted fiscal base, smaller school districts generally draw from too scant a reservoir of adult civic talent to insure informed and creative leadership on local school boards.

On the other hand, school districts with a pupil population larger than 150,000 are prone to bureaucratic rigidities and impersonalities, and are likely to produce an unhealthy tension between concerned parents on the one hand and top school officials and

board members on the other. Even districts below 150,000 pupil population can become ossified unless provisions are made for the delegation of discretion and authority to appropriate substructures. Some of America's large urban school districts, in particular, need drastic and effective decentralization.* In providing for such decentralization, however, every effort must be made to assure that new district lines do not reinforce racial, social and economic segregation and the ghettoization of minorities.†

B. *Existing fiscal inequities should be reduced and legal constraints affecting local school districts should be liberalized.*

Inequities in revenue base among school districts guarantee inequality in educational opportunity. Wealthy school districts are able to provide educational facilities and services vastly superior to those available in poorer districts. Formulas for State and Federal aid to local school districts must be fashioned in such a way as to provide educational opportunities more nearly comparable to those now available in our best school districts. In the case of school populations that are marked by substantial cultural deprivation, true equality of educational opportunity will be provided only by assuring revenues substantially above those available to culturally privileged middle class school populations. This, of course, implies a far greater State responsibility for reducing educational inequities than has occurred in the past.

*See comment of Robert L. Thorndike, p. 24.
†See comment of Sidney Hook, p. 24.

Furthermore, archaic statutes and constitutional provisions at the State level have imposed impossibly restrictive constraints upon local educational policy makers. Tax limitations, unrealistic ceilings on bonded indebtedness, bewildering legislative and administrative codes governing certification and other educational practices, and cumbersome rules mandating school budget referenda, all conspire to erode the meaningful discretion of local school boards and local governmental authorities in matters of educational policy.

C. *Local school board members and local school district superintendents should be upgraded in quality and should be provided with sophisticated and well paid staff assistants.*

The principle of lay control of American public schools is sound. But lay control can have positive effects only when exercised by highly qualified civic leaders working in close association with professionally qualified school administrators and teachers.

Partisan vs. non-partisan nomination of school board candidates is probably an irrelevant issue. But every effort should be made by local civic and educational groups (PTA, League of Women Voters, neighborhood associations, etc.) to develop broadly representative lists of the best qualified citizens in the district to aid those responsible for the formal nominating process in selecting top-level slates of candidates. Then, whoever loses in the final election, the schools win.

Since school boards on all important issues should look to the superintendent for information, advice, and recommendations,

the capability of the local school administrator is a matter of crucial importance to wise educational policy making. Superintendents today are not, and cannot be, autocratic barons of local educational fiefdoms. They should be brokers among several layers and divisions of government (school and general); they should be catalysts of collegial decision-making; they should be well-grounded in study of the purposes of education; they should be wise and sophisticated in inter- and intra-group politics; they should be skilled in public relations and in bargaining negotiations; they should be capable of fearless innovation; they should be informed about new State and Federal policies affecting local educational resources and programs.

Leaders of this quality should be well paid and superbly trained. Traditional certification and educational requirements and existing salaries for superintendents are in general pathetically inadequate. Schools of education have a special responsibility to overhaul their courses for educational administrators at both the pre-entry and mid-career levels. Active recruiting for superintendents should tap reservoirs of talented manpower in business, industry, and other professions, as well as in education itself—a direction that implies the re-definition of traditional certification standards for superintendents. Salaries for top school administrators should be set at levels comparable to administrative positions of like complexity and responsibility in other walks of life. By and large, this means a substantial upgrading of salary schedules for school superintendents across the nation. This recommendation obviously has implications for the salary schedules of teachers and principals as well. Teachers' and principals' salaries should reflect the im-

portance of their respective roles in society and the length and intensity of training needed for professional preparation.* As far as teachers are concerned, blue-collar wages in an area should serve generally as a base for determining their *minimum* salary schedules. Truly outstanding teachers should earn as much as, or more than, top supervisory staff. Again, adequate salary structures are improbable in tiny school districts.

And boards and superintendents need help. Each local educational agency should be appropriately staffed with younger professionals and with adequate clerical and secretarial assistance qualified to provide local school authorities with the technical and informational services needed to conduct wise, imaginative and prudent educational policy making.

D. *Local school authorities should become active participants in local and regional boards and commissions concerned with efforts to improve the human condition generally.*

Schools are not islands. The success of the formal school enterprise depends increasingly upon non-school factors. Public and private efforts in such fields as health, nutrition, job opportunities, in-service vocational training, welfare, discrimination, recreation, housing, civic culture, higher and adult education, are logically and inextricably related to the functions and goals of the public schools. In addition, regional cooperation, especially in metro-

*See comment of James S. Coleman, p. 25.

politan areas, among school districts is often warranted in order to maximize the effectiveness of educational opportunities provided by the formal school system.

As Federal, State and local governmental programs working with the private sector proliferate in the "people problem" area, new regional planning and coordinating bodies and mechanisms should be established to facilitate efficient and effective efforts to improve the human condition at local and regional levels. School authorities should play an important role in such emerging bodies and mechanisms. Specifically, they should take the initiative in cooperating with other agencies concerned with non-school services for human resource development within a single district; they should cooperate with neighboring school districts in developing regional patterns of social planning and policy.

II. Improving Educational Policy Making at the State Level

A. *The recommendations noted above for upgrading the quality and staff of local school boards and superintendents are equally applicable in a generic sense at the level of State boards of education and chief State school officers.*

State educational agencies are the fulcrums of educational policy making in the United States. What they do and recommend can result in powerful leverage upon State legislative and gubernatorial policies affecting education throughout the State; can directly affect the functions and behaviors of local schools and school districts; and can frequently make or break the success of Federal

educational programs whether or not such programs are funneled through State departments of education.

In consequence, the quality of persons attracted to positions of responsibility on State school boards or as chief State school officers is a matter of utmost importance in assuring educational policy making of a high order.

Whether State school board members are elected or appointed is less important than the lists from which their names are drawn, and the training and experience which they bring with them to their posts of responsibility.

It is important, however, that chief State school officers be appointed by, and that they should serve at the pleasure of, State boards of education. Only thus can they be freed from the immediate pressures of untoward political interference by powerful legislators and group interests. This does not free the chief State school officer from necessary political relationships with the Governor and the legislature on over-arching and long-term questions of educational policy and finance. But it does remove or lessen immediate partisan and group interest calculations from his day-to-day considerations.

Almost universally, chief State school officers need more adequate staff to assist them—and indirectly their boards, the Governor and the legislature—in planning, coordinating, and implementing educational policies. A system of line specialists in the State educational agency is by itself an inadequate arrangement for providing top officials with the type of coordinated program planning needed in modern educational policy making.

It goes without saying that chief State school officers should command salaries and perquisites commensurate with their responsibilities. The median income of college presidents in the area should be the minimum standard of remuneration.

B. *Top professional positions in State departments of education should be exempt from normal civil service requirements and standards.*

Educational policy making at the State level can never rise much higher than the quality of policy inputs from the top professional personnel that direct the various divisions and bureaus of State education departments.

Most States in the Union have imposed upon State education agencies a series of restrictive classifications and salary scales related not to competing professional markets but to archaic statewide civil service regulations. In consequence, chief State school officers are frequently confronted with trying to fill $20,000 jobs with $9,000 offers. To make matters worse, statewide retirement plans and other fringe benefits are frequently unrelated to, and are non-competitive with, comparable benefits and vesting rights in competing educational institutions. Many local government and most university (e.g., TIAA) retirement and fringe benefit programs, are far more favorable than those existing in many State education agencies.

If State education agencies are to perform their policy and administrative functions adequately, new salary, retirement, and fringe-benefit standards should be created for top-level personnel—freed from the restrictions imposed by traditional State civil

service regulations. In addition, appropriate inducements should be created to attract top professional talent from business, colleges, and schools, to work on limited tours of duty (one to two years) in policy positions in both State and Federal education agencies.

C. *Governors and State legislatures need more adequate staff services to help them carry out more effectively their educational and human development policy-making responsibilities.*

State educational policy is ultimately determined, not by State school boards or State education agencies, but by responsible elected officials—especially Governors and legislative representatives.

As human development problems increase in their complexity and become more insistent in their demands for concerted response, Governors and legislative bodies and committees need additional staff help in the fields of policy planning and program evaluation and coordination.

Such additional staff must serve as an intellectual bridge to the State education agencies, to interstate educational compacts, and to other State and Federal agencies concerned with overall human resource development.

D. *State departments of education and State legislatures should increase substantially their investment in decision-oriented research in the field of education.*

Partly through Federal funds, partly through State-initiated resources, many States in recent years have improved their capacity

for inducing and conducting operational studies related to evaluating and improving educational performance in the nation's schools.

But State endeavors in this area are still woefully inadequate. State departments of education have a special responsibility to provide leadership in helping local educational agencies to understand what operational research can do in the way of monitoring, evaluating, and improving educational practices. Too many school systems, and too many individual schools, conduct their educational enterprises without knowledge of the successes or failures of similar educational practices in neighboring districts and regions. Innovative programs remain unevaluated, or, if evaluated, they remain in splendid isolation. This is particularly true in central cities and school districts.

State departments of education should be adequately staffed and funded to develop decision-oriented research and information banks relevant to school practices, and should be equipped to provide technical assistance services to local educational agencies concerned with the evaluation and improvement of educational programs.

III. Improving Educational Policy Making at the Federal Level

A. *The Federal government should put its educational and human development house in order by establishing without delay a Federal Department of Education of Cabinet rank, and by strengthening planning and coordinating mechanisms in the Executive Office of the President.*

Representative Edith Green recently listed 42 separate Federal agencies charged with responsibilities for educational policy. There is no possibility of consolidating all of these educational activities and placing them under one department, even if such a move were desirable. But there is both the possibility and the necessity of grouping many of the most important educational programs, and of placing them in a single Cabinet department.

The present Department of Health, Education and Welfare is grotesque in size and in administrative complexity. It should be bifurcated into a Department of Health and Welfare and a separate Department of Education. At least some of the educational functions presently carried out by other Federal departments and agencies should be transferred to the new Department of Education. Precisely which functions should be transferred should rest upon a competent study of the problem.

At the same time, in view of the impossibility of gathering all human resource functions of the Federal government into a single agency, and the desirability of maintaining some degree of administrative pluralism in the Federal government's approach to education, the Executive Office of the President should be strengthened concurrently in order to help the President (and indirectly the Congress) to effect a more coherent system for human resource development planning and execution in the Federal government as a whole. One of the continuing responsibilities of this additional Executive Office staff would be to relate Federal policies sensitively and creatively to State, local and private programs in the education and human resource develop-

ment fields in order to insure an appropriate catalytic and non-dominating Federal role in these important areas of social need.*

B. *The Federal government should increase its share of the financial burden for American education through more consolidated and more flexible categorical grants, through special administrative grants earmarked for the improvement of the capacity of State and local authorities to upgrade their own educational policy making machinery, and through markedly increased funds for the education and re-training of policy making, policy-coordinating, and policy-evaluating personnel (staff and line) at the State and local levels.*†

Un-earmarked grants-in-aid by the Federal government to State and local educational authorities would create more problems than they would solve. There are national purposes to be served by American education that are distinct from the sum of educational decisions made by State and local authorities. The effect of Federal leverage depends directly on the position and capability of the State fulcrum. The achievement of national purposes can be most effectively realized if Federal categorical programs are more liberally and predictably funded and more generally grouped, allowing additional discretion to State and local authorities and putting together a policy mix that meets broad Federal mandates while promoting local initiatives and responsibility. Fiscal inequities among States should receive special Federal attention, so

*See comment of James E. Allen, p. 26.
†See comment of James S. Coleman, p. 26.

that low resource States can have specific Federal assistance in redistributing educational income in accordance with their needs and priorities.

But such developments cannot occur with any promise of success unless there is a general improvement in the capacity of State and local authorities to formulate and to execute rational and responsible educational policies at their respective levels. In line with the spirit and intent of Title V of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the Federal government should give additional funds to State and local educational authorities to help them staff and improve their policy making machinery.

And college, university, and in-service training programs aimed at producing and upgrading a new and relevant generation of educational policy makers should be liberally supported with Federal funds.

C. *The Federal government has a special responsibility to invest extensively in resource-creating activities for education.*

Better educational practices and services will emerge in the final analysis from new knowledge and markedly increased skills in the conduct of education. Unless the Federal government invests in resource-creating activities (educational research, teacher training and development, curricular reform, and new techniques and standards of evaluation and assessment), major advances in educational policy will not occur no matter how much the formal machinery for educational policy making is improved. Of all

Federal government responsibilities related to the improvement of education in the United States, this is unquestionably the most fundamental.

From past experience, it is unlikely that either State or local educational agencies will undertake this central seminal function. The Federal government, therefore, should take steps to involve the State and local educational agencies in a partnership arrangement to carry out these activities. Funds should be committed to analyze systematically through the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, the U.S. Office of Education, or through some other appropriate agency, the most effective way for this partnership to function in developing resource-creating activities.

Although Federal legislation and Congressional appropriations for resource-creating purposes have increased substantially over the past decade, they have not kept pace with the volume and variety of Federal grants-in-aid for direct operating educational programs. In consequence, many of these programs have been inadequately staffed and have been based upon an inadequate understanding of the preconditions for successful implementation and evaluation.

One problem has been that the segments of the United States Office of Education charged with administering resource-creating educational activities have been woefully understaffed. In consequence, the staff has been overburdened with procedural and logistical problems and has been unable to give appropriate attention to the substance of on-going or needed scholarship and innovation.

The implications of the above are that appropriations and staff related to resource-creating activities in education must be maintained in proper proportions to operating programs, and that in a number of cases resource-creating activities should enjoy a lead time advantage if operating programs are to be effectively implemented.

Finally, substantial funds should be devoted to investment in educational resource creation that are not directly tied to existing or projected operating programs. Furthermore, educational research and resource creation should be interpreted to include the whole range of academic and professional disciplines of the modern university as these bear upon educational theory and practice. Only in this way can the free flow of imagination, insight, and scholarship inform the long-range ends and means of American education.

CONCLUSION

These recommendations for improving educational policy making in the United States are not sufficient, but we believe that each of them is necessary.

In a complex and pluralistic society, the task of improving educational policy is almost universal. Professional associations and unions, business and industry, universities, textbook publishers, civic associations, parents, taxpayers' leagues, the mass media, and students themselves—all of these and more should participate actively in searching for new and more effective ways of improving

our educational services. But the ultimate responsibility falls upon those charged with the formal governmental authority for educational decision-making.

Why these formal instrumentalities should be drastically improved was summarized more than a half century ago by H. G. Wells:

> "If humanity cannot develop an education far beyond anything that is now provided, if it cannot collectively invent devices and solve problems on a much richer and broader scale than it does at the present time, it cannot hope to achieve any very much finer order or any more general happiness than it now enjoys."

Statements of Comment, Reservation, or Dissent

Statements of Comment, Reservation, or Dissent

Page 8—By Robert L. Thorndike:

Possibly we should acknowledge that we have had no actual experience of carrying out this type of decentralization, and that the recommendation is based on dissatisfaction with what exists and faith that some type of subdivision will be an improvement.

Page 8—By Sidney Hook:

Care must be taken to prevent, under the cover of decentralization, the erosion of minimum objective standards of competence and performance in the hiring and evaluation of teachers. These standards should be established for each state and administered by professionally trained educators not solely responsible to the local school board. Of particular importance is the conscientious observance of equitable due process in terminating a teacher's employment and safeguarding the principles of academic freedom. The selection of teachers should be made from a civil service list.

Although it is desirable to draw representative elements of the local community into consultation on school problems (including dis-

cussion of local school needs and the construction of curriculum), authority for the actual decisions on, and implementation of, all curricular matters must ultimately rest in the hands of professional educators who enjoy civil service status. The curriculum should strive to do justice not only to the common human experience and facilitate the acquisition of the knowledge, skills and values required for living in the modern world, it should also familiarize the student with the authentic cultural experiences of different ethnic groups in American life, including his own wherever relevant. The study of such elements, however, must be free from any ideological bias of a racial, political, or religious character lest schools in different regions of the country become propaganda centers warring against each other.

Page 11–By James S. Coleman:

I view teachers' salaries somewhat differently. Salaries should be established not by what is "equitable" in relation to other occupations, nor by the amount of preparation. They should be established at levels to attract persons of the quality and training desired by the community, no less and no more. If a salary increase will bring neither better teachers nor better instruction from those who are teaching, then it is an added cost to the community without benefit. Benefits in schooling are so desperately needed that expenditures which bring no benefits are in effect depriving children of education.

Page 18—By James E. Allen, Jr.:

Although I favor generally the creation of a Federal Department of Education of Cabinet rank, I think the rationale backing up this recommendation in the paper is inadequate and lacks specificity. It seems a little weak to recommend the establishment of a separate Department without spelling out more definitively its functions and responsibilities.

Page 18—By James S. Coleman:

I disagree both with existing Federal expenditures in education and with the recommendations. I believe that Federal funds for education can be most effective if placed directly in the hands of the consumers, families of school-age children. Such educational supplements in the form of vouchers could be used for added schooling either within the public school or outside it—and their existence would bring about the kind of pluralism of control in education that various decentralization plans are presently striving to attain with little success. The same principle holds for post-secondary education: a subsidy directly to consumers, based on the model of the G.I. Bill, is clearly preferable to subsidies either to institutions or to states.

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